



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

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## HB 2067 RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

House Committee on  
Ocean and Marine Resources  
Public Hearng - February 1, 1988

By  
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Philip Helfrich, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology  
Richard Grigg, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology  
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HB 2067 would amend HRS 188 by adding a new section that would prohibit the taking of live stony coral of the Funjiidae or Pocilloporidae families except by permit authorized under HRS Section 187A-6 or 183-41.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

### General Comments

The need for protection of coral resources of the State of Hawaii has been an ongoing and frequent topic of discussion before the legislature. Opponents of regulatory controls have pointed out the potential impacts of such legislation to local coral sales businesses and the difficulty in enforcement of restrictions on taking of local corals due to the import of similar species from out-of-state. Others have questioned the need for any controls. Proponents of legislation restricting the taking of corals have pointed out the paucity of stony corals, particularly the Fungidii, in areas subject to high usage due to indiscriminate collection practices. The one major point of agreement by both sides is the recognition that insufficient information on the population biology of stony corals is available for application to rational management practices.

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Appropriate resource management, be it timber, water, fish, or coral, can be accomplished only if the nature and characteristics of the resource are known and understood. In the case of stony corals in Hawaii, data on

growth rates, mortality, populations and habitat requirements are either lacking, out of date, or so scattered that a comprehensive evaluation of the biology of the genera is not presently possible. HRS 187 A-2(6) directs the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to acquire such data in order to provide the basis for informed regulatory decisions. We strongly urge that the DLNR and the University be directed and encouraged, with the necessary funds, to pursue the much needed coral biology studies.

#### Specific Comments:

HB 2067 attempts to meet coral resource management issues inasmuch as it would prohibit taking of stony corals without a permit. However, it would allow commercial taking under the permit provisions of HRS 183-41. By requiring a permit to harvest corals, the DLNR would have a potential regulatory framework to compile substantive information on the resource base for more informed management. We are concerned, however, as to the ability of DLNR to enforce this legislation. At present, it is unlikely that DLNR has either the manpower or budget to expand their enforcement practices to encompass additional coral taking responsibilities. If the intent of the legislation is to be achieved, provision for enforcement subsidies should be recognized. We suggest that in addition to the permit procedure, a reporting mechanism be established whereby commercial buyers of stony corals are required to submit copies of purchase orders to a designated office of the DLNR. This would provide baseline fishery (coral) statistics not only on the local harvest but also on the relative proportion of local vs. imported sales.

We further suggest that HB 2067 be amended to direct the DLNR to designate certain areas as protected areas from coral harvest in accordance with their resource management responsibilities as provided under HRS 187A-2(3).

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